Council (TIFAC), an autonomous body of the Department of Science and Technology (DST) has commissioned a pilot project entitled "Technology dissemination, commercialization and utilization of geranium (*Pelargonium graveolens)* cultivation through processing and value addition of end products in Uttaranchal at bio-village level" through CIMAP, Lucknow. The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) has supported a project on field demonstration of improved agro-technology including processing of Damask Rose (*Rosa domascena)* and pyrethrum (*Chrysanthemum cinerarifolium)* in Uttaranchal State. A project on conservation and propagation of orchids of medicinal importance has also been supported at the High Altitude Plant Physiology Research Centre, Srinagar-Garhwal. Two more DBT sponsored projects, on the genetic diversity and large scale propagation methods of two medicinal plants (*Aconitum and Rheum* complex) and on the *in vitro* propagation of four endemic medicinal species of Himalayas (*Arnebio benthami, Angelica glauca, Swertia angustifolia and Saussurea obvallata)* have been recently completed at High Altitude Plant Physiology Research Centre, Srinagar-Garhwal and the G.B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development, Almora, respectively. As of now, the Government has no proposal to either expand the existing centres or establish new ones in Uttaranchal for plants of odour and medicinal use.

Functioning of Regional Sophisticated Instrumentation Centre, Nagpur

1214. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that a Regional Sophisticated Instrumentation Centre at Nagpur, established in collaboration with Nagpur University during the eighties, by the Department of Science and Technology, equipped with imported instruments worth crores of rupees for research and industrial analysis, is lying idle, thus depriving researchers an opportunity for research analysis;

(b) if so, who is responsible for this; and

(c) when this Centre would become functional?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND

TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT): (a) to (c) The Regional Sophisticated Instrumentation Centre at Nagpur University (now called Sophisticated Analytical Instrument Facility (SAIF) is functioning at present and the samples from the researchers/users are being regularly analyzed at the SAIF. Necessary action to repair and rectify equipment is invariably taken if such equipment falls into disrepair. Action has also been taken to generally improve the functioning of the Centre.

Price index

1215. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that during the last three years the price index of foodgrains have remained almost stationery while the price index of all commodities has gone up by 14.6 per cent;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to improve the rural economy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) and (b) According to the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) with base 1993-94=100 the WPI of foodgrains declined by 1.2% during 1999-2000 to 2002-2003 while WPI of all commodities increased by 14.8% during the same period. The reason for the marginal decline in the prices of foodgrains can be traced to the comfortable stock position of rice and wheat coupled with remarkable increase in production of foodgrains during both years 1999-2000 and 2001-2002, which ensured adequate availability of foodgrains in the country. As regards the increase in the WPI of all commodities, it may be noted that the WPI in respect of the major group "fuel, power, light and lubricants" increased by 47.7% during the period 1999-2000—2002-2003 while the WPI in respect of the major group "manufactured products" increased by 7.9% during this period. The WPI for the broad group "primary articles" increased by 10.1% during the same period. Though WPI for the sub-group "foodgrains" forms a part of primary articles, its share in the weight of the broad group "primary articles" is relatively low and hence the decline in the prices of foodgrains during 1999-2000—2002-2003 was more than offset by the increase in the prices of other items in the broad group of primary articles.